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Blacksmith Volume 2 Chapter 1

Today, my school life begins.

I got up early today to make sure my uniform was in order.

You see, the uniforms have a simple design that uses the colour white as their base, while more expensive decorations accented other areas. These truly are uniforms created for a school centered around the nobility.

I confirmed my appearance in front of the mirror one last time. Standing tall with a skinny disposition, yet still having decent muscles, the uniform looked good on me if I do say so myself.

"Yeah, this is good."

Kururi Helan.

Today is the beginning of the fate I resolved myself for three years ago.

As I passed through the door of my apartment there were two people waiting for me, each wearing a uniform of their own.

"Let's go."

"Yeah." "Yes!"

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When looking at the school building from a bird's-eye view, it seems to take on the form of the katakana for Russia(\square).

I heard that it has a vast garden surrounded by buildings. If it's true, it would probably make a good spot to hang out during lunch or after school.

Truly, a land for the rich!

The east side of the school is where the majority of the classrooms are, it's also the area where the students hang out the most.

We study the required courses in the base classes, which are divided from letters 'A' to 'J'.

The north side of the school holds all of the rooms for the practical electives, while just outside it is the school field used for activities and events.

It's a big field!

I heard that there are even classes where you cultivate your own medicinal plants in the classrooms, but hey, it's a big school I wouldn't be surprised if there were.

Since I'm on the topic, the south side of the school holds the library that Iris is fond of, while the west side are rooms that students can use for individual reasons.

It's good to know these things if you want to live a healthy school life.

... and once we finally arrived at school, the class roster was there to greet us.

As expected, Vaine and I were placed into the A-class.

Crossy however, was unfortunately placed into the C-class.

Its feels a little lonely to be divided so soon.

The school was created in the arrangement that the first years were on the

third floor while the third years were on the first floor.

The A class was the one closest to the stairs, while the J class was in the back.

There were already a few students in class when we entered.

I looked around, but neither Eliza nor Iris seemed to be here yet.

Our seats were already pre-determined, while I was placed in the back left-hand corner, Vaine was seated in the back right-hand corner.

Vaine couldn't help but insist that we were intentionally seated this way for some reason.

I don't really think so though.

The students eventually started flowing in in droves, all taking their respective seats once class started.

Eliza's in the second seat from the front of the third column to the right.

We're a bit far from each other.

Well, I can still see her from where I am so it's not all bad.

Eventually somebody not wearing a uniform entered finally starting homeroom.

"Ah."

It was the Phys-ed instructor from the physical exam, I think his name was Wu or something like that.

"Everyone, my name is Mitchell Wu and I'm going to be serving as your teacher for the next year, nice to meet you guys. Its an honour to be the one to

teach the outstanding A-class."

Wu-sensei was the slender-but-handsome kind of guy, wearing his hair in a ponytail and all that.

Although I've only seen him twice myself, he seems to only wear clothes made for exercise for some reason.

Wu-sensei's lecture had started, but it was only the schedule for what we were doing today.

"Before anything else is the entrance ceremony, and do try to enjoy it please, just being accepted here is something that you should celebrate, no? After that return to the classroom, and I'll give an explanation of how the school class system works."

Once his lecture was over, Wu-sensei led us to the meeting place on the north side of the school.

The freshmen steadily gathered from the beginning of A-class to the end of the J-class.

We were gathering at the event grounds outside, but I think the entrance ceremony was going to be held in one of the other buildings like the gymnasium.

Nobody wants to just stand outside, and it could even be freely decorated if it were held there.

For the aristocracy it's not an exaggeration to say that this is the most auspicious day to attend school, while expecting a grand welcome.

Two burly men standing at the entrance to the assembly halls opened the gates.

"Congratulations on your admission!"

Overflowing cheers erupted from the opened gates.

A grand welcome created by our upperclassmen.

The road to the hall was adorned with the flowers planted yearly, giving off a gorgeous view while inside the ceilings and walls were all decorated with bright and sparkling ornaments.

It was beautiful.

My heart was grasped by the hospitality that far exceeded my expectations.

I wasn't the only one making a stupefied face, everyone else in the first-year was too.

"Wow."

I turned my neck to get a good look at the surroundings.

It's been awhile since I rejoiced so purely.

The flower-path continued on inside, leading up to a group of chairs where the first-years took their seats.

"Everyone, what a fine day it is today."

The person who was talking was an old man who seemed to have lived a splendid amount of years.

"I am the principal of this school, Aidan Maurice and I would like to congratulate all of you from the bottom of my heart on your admission. While it may be nice to sit down and relax with crossed legs, I would like to think that you would prefer to strive for the best in your studies during your next three years here.

Now that's enough from an old man like me, so please enjoy this next event created by your upperclassmen just for you."

The freshmen raised up cheers of joy.

Their exhilaration just didn't seem to have an end.

As if he had wings, a young man jumped out over the crowd, landing at the podium and raised his voice.

"Now let's party!"

With the make-up he had on, I guess they were going to do something like circus.

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Song, dance, and games, once all the events were done the entrance ceremony came to a close with a large sense of satisfaction.

That was a great experience, and with this the first year of my school life begins.

It's a good tradition, I wonder if we're going to make something this great next year?

Everyone continued talking about the entrance ceremony on the way back to the classroom.

I mean, how could we not?

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"Excuse me..."
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A voice suddenly called out to me from behind, it was a girl.

"You're Kururi Helan right?"

"Yeah?"

The girl hugged her waist with her arms, while her eyes seemed to sparkle a little.

"I knew it! I-I'm a fan of Kururi-san afterall!"

A fan?! I have fans?!

Why do I have fans?! I don't remember doing anything worth remembering...

"Oh umm... yeah, and your name was?"

"My name is Heart Valentine."

The eyes of the girl who named herself as Heart seemed to be in some sort of trance, and try as I may, I couldn't keep my drooping eyes from taking a quick look at her chest which seemed to be one of her defining characteristics.

"I've heard rumors about you. You're one of the student's that almost got a perfect score in the placement test, while also being a prodigy in magic studies."

"Well..."

I couldn't help but feel a little embarrassed at being praised so straight forwardly. I scratched my head that suddenly felt itchy for some reason.

"Not to mention you're also the next in line to become the lord of the Helan territory, isn't that unfair? Some people just have all the luck."

"Well, you're probably not too bad yourself to be smart enough to get into the A-class Heart-san."

"I-I guess."

We shook hands as she panicked a little.

"In just the first grade there's now Kururi-san, Prince Arc, Rail-san, and Elizasan, y-you're going to be the school's Miracle Four! People on a whole other dimension from us ordinary folk."

What's with that name?! Please stop! It's too embarrassing!

"Where did you hear such a story?"

"I'm not sure, but I do know that your fan club won't lose anyone else's, not even to Prince Arc's."

"I never wanted to compete in such a thing in the first place."

"Really?"

Heart seemed to be a bit depressed at my response.

"Don't be sad, students should focus on their academics instead of fan-clubs right?"

"Okay, now everyone get into your assigned seats!"

Wu-sensei came at the perfect time.

That wasn't a nice mood I had going on there, so I'd rather avoid it if possible.

"I hope you all enjoyed the entrance ceremony, and you all strive in your studies. Now then, let's begin the description of the class system."

Although the lecture was long, I was able to get the gist of it in my notes.

We have four required course we have to take:

Advanced Arithmetic

Magic Science

Swordplay

History

Everyone in the A-class have received these, because they're subjects we must absolutely take.

Then there are four other electives that we can choose from a list with fifteen items: Accounting, Chemistry

Psychology, Geology,

Astronomical Science, Architecture,

Animal Husbandry, Medical Science,

Herbalism, Emperor Studies,

Astrology, Martial Arts,

Philosophy, Law, and Biology.

These are subjects held jointly with other classes.

We're supposed to lock them in within two weeks, and as of right now I'm a little interested in herbalism.

After thinking about it a bit more, I'll figure out what else I want to take.

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"Pass down the documents so that everyone can have a look at what electives they can choose, and that should be it for the day. I'd recommend that you try exploring the school a bit while its daylight. Class dismissed."

Wu-sensei vigorously left the classroom.

He sure does give off a refreshing feeling.

"Kururi-san."

The same moment Wu-sensei left, Heart called out to me again.

"What is it?"

"Are you going to join any of the extracurricular clubs?"

"Oh, I guess that does sound nice."

"Yeah, but I haven't made a decision yet on which to join."

"Yeah?"

I wonder what clubs they have here...

Soccer maybe? I don't know.

"Why don't you make a club then? Of course the president will be Kururisan."

"They're that easy to make?"

"Yeah, as long as you get the numbers required for it."

"I haven't even decided what I'd do, and would it really be that easy to gather members?"

"I'm sure it would be as long as we used your name Kururi-san, just give me a moment."

Heart took out a pen and began to write a letter on a blank sheet of paper she took from somewhere.

It gave off a good and rhythmic sound.

"Is anyone interested to join a club created by the one and only Kururi Helan?!! Those interested meet at the courtyard, but be quick! We're taking applications at 4pm!!"

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"...aren't you a bit too fired up about this?"

"I only spoke the truth."

"I haven't even decided if I was going to make one or not."

"...oh yeah."

"Oh yeah?!"

I couldn't help but yell in response.
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Heart stuck her self-made poster in the hallway bulletin board, then we moved to the courtyard together.

The courtyard was covered in a well maintained lawn, with a fountain in the center of it all.

This was the kind of place you'd want to eat lunch on a sunny day.

"I hope we get a lot of applicants."

Heart said while sitting down.

I replied as I sat down as well.

"I guess."

I didn't feel comfortable enough so I decided to lay down instead.

The tingling sensation of the grass feels great, I think I might fall asleep at this rate.

"Kururi Helan's club applicants are supposed to gather here right?" ...or not.

To the side from where I was laying, came a young man whose face I haven't seen before.

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"Ah, yeah."
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I was a little surprised that one would come so soon.

Thanks for coming I guess.

After that people started to come in droves, way past the four o'clock appointment.

Heart started taking a roll call.

One, two, three... forty-seven, forty-eight!

"Kururi-san, there are forty-eight people gathered here including myself."

Forty-nine if I'm included too.

This is way too many.

I can't manage this many people!

Vaine and Crossy weren't here either, maybe they were doing special training with each other again?

Heart stood in front of everyone, and took a deep breath.

"Forty-eight people have gathered here today for Kururi Helan. Will you not swear absolute loyalty to him?!"

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"" "" Oh! "" ""
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"If after joining you dare to betray Kururi Helan, will you be ready to receive your deserved punishment?"

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"" "" Oh! "" ""
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"Now everyone! Bow to Kururi Helan-dono, your new leader!"

Everyone quickly bowed at once.

What the hell is this?!

I thought this was just going to be a club where I could spend my days leisurely with a few friends!! How did it turn to this direction?!

Clubs aren't supposed to be this way!!

Aren't they a bit loud too?! They're all yelling!

As if slapping me in the face, they all yelled "Osu!" at once.

"Kururi-san, please enjoy this club we've created for you but we'll need something to distinguish us from everyone else."

...Well, there are the swords I've produced in mass quantities...

I should just be able to cover everyone with my stock...

"...I guess I could give everyone a sword I've smithed personally."

"Thank you, now let's be off to claim the funds from the department teachers."

"Are we capable of such a thing?"

"It's possible, just give the word and we'll charge."

Charge?! Are you going to war here?!

Are you going to assault the teachers or something?!

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"...okay, charge."
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"" "" Roger! "" ""

Oh, maybe this isn't so bad.

Blacksmith Volume 2 Chapter 2

Entering the school building from the courtyard, I went to the staff room located on the south side.

I was walking with forty-eight people spreading out behind me like a triangle attached to my back, but I couldn't help but feel that everybody kept giving me weird looks.

I think I saw this scene in the show 'The Great White Tower (Shiroi Kyoto/巨塔)' before...

There's no way this is actually happening, because doesn't this make me look like some kind of Evil Boss or something?!

Since everyone was following me so seriously I tried stopping for a second to see what would happen, and they all stopped in unison as if they practiced it.

...I have to admit though, this is getting kind of fun!

The downright pleasant sound of synchronized footsteps echoed throughout the hallway.

Fortunately, the corridor is wide so there's enough space for the other students to pass by, while I majestically blocked the area in the middle with my group.

The thing is, students that passed by us seemed awfully scared as they made eye-contact with me.

...or rather the moment they did, they turned their eyes away.

As we proceeded down the hallway, there were two people standing in the middle of it in some kind of deep discussion.

They haven't seem to realized we were here.

"Hey you two, you're in Kururi-san's way."

Somebody behind me said aloud.

The two of them turned towards us in surprise after realizing the size of my group.

They quietly mouthed "We're so sorry." and quickly moved away.

Wait, no, I'm the one that should be sorry!!

This is dangerous! The quality is too evil!

What are we doing?! Are we trying to conquer the school or something?!

"Umm, that should be enough you guys-"

I stopped walking and turned around.

Woah!!

Turning around, I finally noticed the tightness of all forty-eight people there, and as their leader I naturally give off this aura that makes other students cower as we approach.

"Everyone, answer this but don't yell since you guys over do it a bit. I know it

might useless to tell you guys but not matter what, absolutely do **not** harm other students."

"""Yes"""

Oh, it looks like they understand.

Maybe because we just started club activities, their loyalty to me seems to be really strong.

If I show them my bad side, what will happen to me if I disappoint them?

Will I get stabbed?

Then again, what's preventing them from stabbing me from behind right now?

It wasn't very long, but I think I just went through a terrible experience.

Finally, we were at the staff room.

I opened the door, taking my first step inside and of course they all followed.

Surprisingly, the sheer population entering the room didn't phase the teacher inside at all.

"Wu-sensei."

It was my homeroom teacher.

It'd be good if he could become my club's counselor, I mean, he's the only teacher I know.

"I've created a club, so I'd appreciate some funding for it."

"So you've already made one? With such a large group too... but is this really the best time to be establishing a club?"

"Bucho(Club Prez) is busy, don't waste his time with your useless banter Wusensei, get to the point."

Busy with what?!

The only thing rushing here was the beating of my heart!

With a sigh, Wu-sensei handed a form over to me.

"Here, I've signed this form to become your club's counselor, so I'll bring you your funds later but... Kururi-kun, isn't your head getting a little big?"

A big head?! I could feel my ears burning in embarrassment. I guess it could look that way from an outsider's perspective.

"Well try to get it in today, I mean the sooner the better right?"

"Yeah got it, but remember to take the student's autonomy into consideration when you have your extracurricular activities, and manage your budget well."

"Got it, and... is there a classroom we can use?"

"Of course, you're free to use the rooms on the west side of the school, but other students may be using them as well, so make sure you have one booked first."

...I guess this wasn't such an impressive school after all.

I had unintentionally raised my hopes for them, but how could they just let a group as suspicious as this be created?!

"By the way, we haven't decided what we're going to do yet."

"That's fine, enough members gathering together is a good enough reason in itself. I think it would be best for you to learn the power of numbers early on, because if I'm right, in the future you're going to be in a position that naturally brings people together."

"...but wouldn't it be dangerous to fully fund an organization that doesn't even have a distinct goal in mind? Let alone one with numbers as great as this?"

Read between the lines sensei! If I disband it I'll be stabbed, but they should let it pass if you stop it!

"Of course, although Kururi-kun, gathering together a large force like this also comes with the responsibility of maintaining it. Don't you think I would've rejected it by now if I didn't think you could handle it?"

That's...

...true, in this world there's no such thing as sweet talk. I might only be 15 year's old, but even I know that.

"Wu-sensei, can you give me more advice if I ever need it again?"

"Anytime, though I doubt you'll need it, I have high hopes for you Kururi-kun."

"Yeah, well then let's go everyone."

Everyone left the room on my cue.

Well, I guess if we got this far I might as well take advantage of it.

"Bucho, why don't we return to the courtyard first to think of the direction we'll take in the future? Then we can find a clubroom."

I nodded my head to Heart's proposal, and we returned to the courtyard.

"Everyone, from now on I'll be talking about what direction I plan to take this club, so I want you all to listen!"

Everyone nodded in response.

I started making my proposition.

"I still haven't decided what to do yet, but I have decided our motive! We will be the one's with the hearts of Gentle Lions!"

They all tilted their heads as if to say 'What does that mean?'.

"On the surface, those that have entered here have been considered superior

in literary and military arts. We've studied hard and know a lot, but even the Aclass has neglected this! We need to ride off of this momentum and change their assessment of us!"

To fire them up I showed them my serious face, flashing a smile to fuel their aspirations.

"We're no good as we are now. In the future, we're supposed to be the ones to stand over others with our abilities, and we will get to that point if we all put in some effort. However, the most important thing is to be able to see things from the perspective of the underdog. That's the caliber that we need! For those who stand above others, with the consideration of those below them, that is our goal! The heart of a Gentle Lion!"

"" "Oh" "" voices of approval were raised.

My first speech seems to have succeeded.

I felt a bit uneasy with how they put me on a pedestal like that, but it doesn't feel bad being able to see everyone's faces gathered together.

"Now let's talk about where we want this group to go, if anyone has an idea do it with a show of hands."

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No one raised their hands.

I don't want to have to start picking people!

"Umm, does it really matter if we have a goal or not?"

The one who raised his hand was a guy with silky hair and glasses.

"You're... Thomas-kun right? If I remember correctly you scored fairly high on the achievement test." "Yeah, it is an honour to know that you know me."

There were students from the A-class here and there, but even among them Thomas was a Moi-level person in his preformance.

I just realized it, but don't I have a lot of talented people here?

"Since we're just starting, do you plan to rent a clubroom?"

"That was my intention."

I haven't made any promises yet though, everything is still up for discussion.

It'd be nice to have a place to meet if this all works out.

"The clubrooms on the west side of the school can only fit about 60 people at most, but if we think about our future growth here, wouldn't it be better just to build a castle?"

A castle?!

Build a castle at school?!

I'm seriously contemplating on whether or not we're going to overrun the school here!

"Isn't that going a little too far? Forget about the construction costs, where would we find the land to build it?"

"Don't worry about it, in the school grounds surrounded by a fence there's a vast open area in the northwest. Just north of the freshman dorms. We've already gotten the approval of the teachers, as for the construction costs... one of my territory's livelihoods is construction, so we'd be able to secure materials and personal for cheap. In total it would take about... half our budget?"

"...is that so?"

Thomas may look like an academic at first glance, but just what is he thinking?

It's a big dream, but I guess that's what you get when the world you live in is small...

"Alright!! Now we know what we're doing!! Thomas-kun, can you take the leadership role for the construction?" Heart agreed.

...Wait, we're actually going through with this?!

"Yeah! Let's build a castle just for us!" Thomas yelled excitedly.

"We'll create a castle completely independant from the school!" Heart excitedly added on.

Unsurprisingly, she seemed to have big ambitions.

By the way, isn't this already at a level of an embassy?! Heart!!

"From the school we should be able to rent some equipment for measurements. Do you think it would be fine if I took some people to help me out?"

"Of course it will be, just do what you need to Thomas-kun."

Thomas happily collected some volunteers and rushed into the school building.

While we moved to the location where we were going to build the castle.

Just as Thomas-kun said, it sure was a vast vacant plot of land.

Even after we complete the castle there would still be space to spare.

It took a while, but Thomas and his group eventually came.

In their hands were various kinds of surveying equipment.

To understand the future of this project, I started a conversation with

Thomas-kun.

"The professional work can be left to my territory's craftsmen. Since we just issued the request to them today, it'll take them two or three days to prepare and get here. Until they arrive though, we'll try to do what we can with the staff on hand, such getting the land ready for the basic materials. Will that be okay?"

"That's amazing Thomas-kun, I have no objections do whatever you think is best. So, what should we start with?"

"First we should survey the area, it's a basic rule of thumb when looking at a construction area, but it shouldn't take too long. Then we can start checking the foundation of the soil and such."

"It feels great to know that I have such an excellent staff. Okay! Why don't you hand me a shovel so I can help?"

"No, umm... why don't you sit down and take a break Bucho?"

"I want to be the kind of leader who works hard for his reward, I can't just sit while you guys work, it'd go against my ideals."

"Bucho!" Thomas-kun seemed to be moved.

Yup, I worded that good, but really I just hate boredom.

"Now Thomas-kun, give out your instructions!"

"Yes!"

Apparently the castle is only to be three-stories high, so it's necessary to get the underlying ground ready.

First, we need to dig a hole.

I've dug out the hot springs before this, so this is the best work for me!

"That's amazing Bucho, you're digging at an amazing pace!" I was

complimented by a club member whose name I didn't know.

"Well I'm accustomed to digging, that's all there is to it."

"You really are amazing though Bucho. From the moment the shovel goes into the ground to when the dirt comes flying out, there aren't any unnecessary movements at all!" I was complimented by a female club member whose name I also didn't know.

"Well, that's just because I'm more experienced at this."

"A moat could be created in an instant at this pace Bucho, I don't even have to work hard and..." I was complimented again by a child that I didn't know.

"Well I have confidence in my speed."

"I wonder, if I copy his movements, will I be able to master digging easily?"

I have other good points too!!

Don't just praise me for my digging skills!!

I worked hard to change myself ever since I turned into Kururi-kun! Isn't there anything else good about me?!

"Kururi Helan, here are the funds that you requested."

It was the voice of Wu-sensei, who had suddenly appeared while interrupting my work.

For some reason he had a pompous bag hanging off of his back.

"...Is the money inside of that bag?"

"Yup, correct. The documents dealing with the summary of its contents are in there too, after you verify it tell me if it's correct or not, and with that I bid you farewell."

With that the funds were dropped onto the ground giving off an amazing sense of weight.

A bit curious, I opened and peered into the layered bag.

Inside was a ridiculous amount of gold coins.

It was an amount I couldn't possibly count by hand.

This is bad, my left hand couldn't stop trembling. I almost want to take some photo's for insurance.

I took a look behind me.

Everyone is seriously working off of Thomas-kun's instructions.

That means... I'm the only one who knows the contents of this bag...

Should I take it?

...No!! I don't want to be stabbed from behind!!

I almost want to say sorry to everyone who was working seriously right now.

Slowly, I carried the bag over in my trembling left hand.

"Everyone, I've received the funds, the biggest obstacle to the castle construction has been cleared."

"Yeah!" "We did it!" "GOOD GOING!!!"

When I saw the happy faces of everyone, I was glad I didn't take it.

"Thomas-kun, give me the hardest job we have."

"Oh you don't need to do that Bucho."

"I do need it. My mind is weak, I'm a bad person, command me!!"

"Command?!"

"Yeah, give me instructions."

"Ah, umm... yeah, over there."

I received new tools from Thomas-kun and headed to the area he pointed to.

There, looking at the sight of the group working for me. I couldn't help but feel the pressure of what I had to take care of now.

With great power comes great responsibility.

I also have to grow.

That's what I thought as I pushed my shovel into the dirt for the nth time.

TN: The great white tower is a Japanese drama series created in 2003, never watched it but apparently they're famous for this scene here:



Blacksmith Volume 2 chapter 3

"I'm so tired..."

The leftover fatigue from yesterday's work felt like it was pulsing through my body.

I must've dug too many holes back then...

Today's our first full-fledged day of classes.

Starting from today, we're allowed to freely choose from the list of optional electives to try out.

I was just barely able to drag my lead-like body to first period, Herbalism.

I chose this elective without hesitation because it's currently the one I'm the most interested in.

In the end, there were about 30 students in total gathered together for the class.

There sure are a lot of girls though...

Even the instructor is female.

"Thanks for coming everyone. My name is Amari and I'll be your instructor for Herbalism."

With a voice that had a nice chime to it, the instructor introduced herself as Amari. She seems to be in her thirties, while her round-frame glasses stand prominent on her warm face.

"Herbalism has many academic as well as practical aspects to it. What you

learn here today can be used to help many more people in your days to come."

That right there is one of the reasons why I chose this class.

I'm not interested in theories and the like.

What I want is knowledge that I can use in the near future for profit.

A good herb merchant will be able to create goods that sell for a higher price than what the herbs originally costed, and the knowledge on how to create those goods can be easily learned in this class.

"Herbs are generally common enough that anyone can experiment with them for a cheap price, but personally my goal is to develop a large variety that anyone can grow for free. For those interested there's an extra seminar on this happening later on, it's even self-sponsored."

Amari-sensei gave a gentle smile.

Yup, she definitely has the heart of a nice person, unlike some other people I know...

"That said, please do, the herbal tour will be free because it's your first time in class, and it'll make me happy to see all of you in a formal lesson."

Sensei smiled again. Ahh~ I'm being healed~

"Oh and even if you're curious, make sure you don't eat any of them. There are some dangerous ones here too."

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We followed Sensei's instructions as we toured the herbs.

By the way, the herbalism classroom is located on the north side of the school on the first floor.

Inside are the herbs that are more suited for indoor cultivation methods, while all the others are cultivated outside.

Oh, and apparently this is the only classroom that directly has an exit to the school grounds.

Different kinds of herbs hung off of the walls and ceiling, while an abundant amount was being grown outside as well.

They fully utilized the land they were given, growing an amount I couldn't possibly see in only an hour.

In the distance I could see something that looked like a vinyl house.

I was getting a little excited thinking about all the herbs I could grow here.

"Excuse me, but you're... Kururi Helan right?"

Calling out to the me who was busily looking at herbs was a boy whose face was mostly covered by his hood.

He was short, and his complexion was pale.

....and ugh, he reeks!!

The intense odour of herbs seemed to emanate off him.

Trying my best not to breath through my nose, I was somehow able to choke out a "Yeah, that's me."

"The name's Toto Gapp, and I've been interested in you for a while."

"I-is that so?"

This is bad, our conversation isn't even registering in my head.

Ugh, I can't block the smell!

"Oh sorry, you're acting like that because of the smell right? Just give me a minute to take off my jacket."

As he said so, Toto started to remove his hood, moving to place it in the corner of the classroom.

While he was coming back, I tentatively tried breathing through my nose.

There's no smell!

Su. (sfx: sniff)

No smell at all!

"I usually wear that to ward off people, because I usually go to places where some unsightly people can be found."

Ward off people?! This is the first time I've heard of this.

"So you needed me for something?"

"Yeah, I was rather surprised that you were interested in herbs. If you want, do you want to take a look at the varieties that I'm developing at the moment?"

"Developing? Wait... You're saying that you've cultivated new herb species?!"

"That's right, that's because I'm a genius in this field. Come on, check this out."

He guided me to an area that had a mass of greenhouses lined up.

Eventually he passed into one and there I saw them.

There were herbs suspended off of the ceiling, herbs planted closely together, palm-sized ones, and some that were almost as big as I was!

All of them were unusual herbs that I haven't seen before.

"Amazing right? I'm the one that created them all."

"All of them?!"

"Yeah, but the unique ones at the vinyl house belong to Amari-sensei."

"That's still amazing though."

I tried giving the small plastic building a small look around.

All of them were herbs that I had never seen before, and there were even some whose beauty rivaled that of flowers.

I couldn't help but touching those ones a little bit.

Their leaves were smooth.

"It's okay to touch, but don't smell them. After you go to bed tomorrow its effect would kick in, and I'm far from finished developing them. I'm still conducting clinical experiments using storage flies."

Are they okay with you doing clinical experiments here at school?! Who gave you permission?! Is this really okay?!

...moving on to the next herb, I tried rubbing its leaves in my hand.

"Oh, that one's also okay to touch, but don't eat. One leaf and you'll end up spitting out all your internal organs. By the way, I've already finished my clinical experiments with that one."

I immediately backed off.

Again, why?!!

"It wasn't safe with the flies?"

"Nope, the fly practically left for heaven with just its smell alone. It took an entire day before it broke free of its delusional world."

This thing's bad!!

Soon I was passed another herb by Toto.

I can't help but feel my sense of values is a little different than his.

"This one's different, this one's more useful for humanity, for example... you know there's herbs for curing colds and other diseases right?"

"Of course."

Telling me to wait, he left for the back of the greenhouse before returning with some tools.

...and then he suddenly started digging at the ground.

"Here, I'll give you a hand."

"No, I'm good."

After a bit, showed me his hands covered in soil.

Inside was some kind of root that seems to have grown distortedly.

"If you eat this, you'll feel an overflowing force come out of your whole body. It'll be extremely useful for patients that require temporary strength in surgery and other operations."

"Isn't that amazing? Do you have any more of these?"

"Unfortunately no, there isn't much of it. I've tried to develop a herb that gives the same effects while being able to grow quickly, but it ended in failure. In truth, when you ate it... well let's just say that it was unfinished."

...I wonder why he's doing all this?

I'm getting a little curious.

"I've also got some special varieties of grass, that grow quickly and sell for a fairly decent price."

"Wow."

...I want, gimme.

"...and that's enough of my long introduction, so now let's talk about the main reason why I approached you."

"Okay, shoot."

"To put it in words, it's because I'm interested in your club Kururi. You have about fifty people right? I just want you to get a few people to test some of my herbs, and of course I'd be willing to pay for your services."

So it was that kind of thing.

"Rejected. No discussion. Sorry, but it's too dangerous. Why can't you just continue your experiments like you have until now?"

"I'm only one person, I can't do everything myself, and it also leaves insufficient data."

"Even so I can't lend out any of my members. That would be too irresponsible of me as their leader."

"Che, I thought you would understand..."

Toto was facing down, somewhat depressed.

He had a really regretful face, but I can't be sorry now.

"Why are you so desperate to develop your herbs?"

"..." Toto silently continued to stare at his feet.

"It's okay if you don't want to say, well then if you'll excus-"

"...its because of gold. I'm a still a noble even if it's for a small border territory, but because I'm the fourth son, it's necessary for me to find a means for supporting myself. I thought that because you were studying to become a blacksmith you would be able to understand... guess I was wrong."

...I do understand! I just can't tell you the actual reason why! I've been hitting hot iron all this time so that I won't embarrass myself in the future!

We're actually comrades!

"For that kind of thing..."

"Go ahead, laugh. You spoiled children of major nobles are all the same."

Toto's depressed mood seems to have hit its climax.

"Hey, what's your expected profit margin?"

"...what?"

"How much do you earn with your herbs?"

"...I don't know, I've never sold them. The only thing I've sold would be that grass I showed you before."

"Well, as long as it doesn't mess around with the human mind, I think it'll be okay."

"What about herbs that open all the pores in the body at once?"

What the hell is that?!

I had involuntarily retorted in my head.

"That's... a little extreme."

"I guess, but that's just how some of them work."

"For now, I'll make a list of your medicinal herbs that I think will sell well, I'll become your sponsor."

"...what? Why?!"

"Well, that's something I should probably tell you another day."

"Understood, when do you think I should start selling? I'm fine with even starting tomorrow."

"It's probably best not to sell these at school, you aren't prepared for it, and you don't have the permissions to either. Instead, three months from now during summer vacation, come over to the Helan territory, and I'll get you all the permits and stuff that you'll need as a merchant. So for now just continue to develop your herbs that you'll require then, and I'll give you a hand after school when I'm free. You won't be disappointed, I work hard."

"-!! Thank you!! Just leave the development to me Kururi!"

Despite his bad complexion, I think this was the best smile he gave all day.

"Do you know about my territory's hot springs?"

"Of course, I bet everyone here knows about them."

"Lots of people, especially wives go there seeking to revitalise their skin, what do you think? Can you smell the gold?"

"Yeah, it's a great stink!"

"What we need developed now are herbs that are good for the skin! That's what we need now, Toto-kun!!"

"Beauty herbs, herbs that make people more beautiful..."

"Yup, those are the herbs that will bring in the gold, even better, one that has no side effects when used."

"No side effects? That's kind of unreasonable."

"Unreasonable? Yes, but that's nothing compared to the demands of a wife!" "...true."

Toto was chewing his nails as he thought. He seems to already be thinking of a way to cultivate them.

"I'll see what I can do Kururi. If you have any more ideas make sure to tell me

about them."

"If I think of any, but for now I'll visit you several times a week to help with the process. Our goal right now is to develop it before summer vacation starts three months from now, a beauty herb!"

"Right!"

...and that, coupled with his bad complexion was his best leering face he made all day.

I wonder why when people think of gold, they always start to leer for some reason...

Guess I'll never know.

Blacksmith Volume 2 Chapter 4

Recently I've noticed that my school life has been progressing in a terribly violent flow, so seeking refuge, I decided now would be a good time to take a look at the school fountain.

On the south side of the school, there's a huge fountain right in between it and the main gate. I've seen it from afar several times now, but it sure does give off a different impression when you look at it close up.

The water is blown up high, causing the temperature around it to feel cooler than it should be.

"Uhyo~"

I chased the apex of the spray with my eyes, and then shook my head a little bit.

"Oh?"

Glancing downwards with the fall of the spray was what appeared to be a girl sitting on the other side of the fountain.

...and she was crying.

Bushu (sfx: spurt) The fountain spurred back to life, hiding her appearance.

I was certain, that was the girl who was one of Eliza's original 'Four Heavenly Kings', I think her name was 'Mary' or something like that.

She was also the girl who always called me 'Servant', so I don't have a very

good impression of her either...

The fountain's spray fell back down, and her figure could be seen again.

Yup, she's still crying.

I think I just saw something that I shouldn't have seen...

The fountain rose again, and her figure was hidden.

I think it would be better if I just leave right now.

Yeah, that would be for the best.

It shouldn't be worth mentioning that getting involved with a crying girl, let alone one who hates me, would definitely bring trouble.

Only a problematic story would await me if I intruded.

The fountain spray fell back down, once again revealing her.

""Ah.""

We made eye-contact.

After staring at each other wordlessly for while, the fountain spray came back up, blocking our lines of sight yet again.

I've been seen, there's no way out now. I can no longer afford running away in silence in this situation.

Building up my courage, I walked over to the area Mary was sitting at along the fountain.

While putting out my best smile, I called out "Hey". Though it's already impossible to pretend to be a naive boy that doesn't know anything.

"...*gusu*" (sfx: crying)

She sniffed her nose, but didn't reply.

Either that, or sniffing her nose was her reply.

Her eyes had become red from her tears, so it looks like she's been crying quite a decent amount.

While saying, "Is there something wrong?", I tried sitting down beside her as naturally as I could.

"...*gusu*, don't sit next to me."

I was shot down instantly?!

"Did something happen with Eliza?"

Although her body language clearly said so, it was still a guess.

"It doesn't concern you."

I know that but I'm already involved!

I could just walk away now you know?! But I didn't you know?!

"Don't say that, at the very least I'm not completely unrelated to Eliza. If you need me to, I can say something to her."

"What do you know about Eliza-sama?! Don't get involved!"

Rubbing her swollen eyes, she threw some violent words at me.

Eliza in a nutshell, is a 'tough' woman character. I know that very well, so there's no way I wouldn't have noticed how close she is with her entourage.

This is also something necessary to maintain the 'balance' of the world!

"The same Eliza that always keeps people at arm's length and has a scary face

when she closes her eyes, though in truth she's just thinking about what kind of dinner she's going to have later?"

"She's not that kind of person!"

"I also know that her favorite food is chiffon cake, though buttered potatoes come a close second for her."

"Th-that can't be... I would've noticed something like that by now..."

"More or less."

"I-I get it already okay?! You know more about Eliza-sama than me okay?!

"I'm not looking down on you or anything, I only said what I knew, nothing more, nothing less."

Mary had a somewhat depressed face.

She must've not liked how much I knew about Eliza that she didn't.

"Even if Eliza acts like that, she's still human, it's not like she's giving you special treatment or anything, so there's no need to worry about it so much."

"How can you say that when you obviously like Eliza-sama that much?"

"I'll stay quiet when I need to, but you know, I can be assertive when I want to be. There's plenty of time to get closer to her."

I flashed another smile.

"I... I've glared at you, and cursed at you before, so why? Why are you being so kind to me?"

"No reason really, just because I can I guess."

I'm only a 'servant' after all.

"You're doing this because you like me?"

"You're wrong!! How did you think of something like that?!"

Her head must be full of flowers or something... ah, she finally smiled a bit. Then she casted her eyes back to the ground.

"You see, I was taken off of Eliza-sama's entourage..." she muttered.

Ahh, so that's why I didn't see her with the other 'Four Heavenly Kings' previously.

"May I ask why?"

"Its because I wasn't deemed worthy enough to serve someone like Elizasama."

"What do you mean?"

"...I was the only one allocated to the E-class during the placement exams.

The other three safely made it to the A-class and have continued to be part of her group, while my position was replaced with another A-class student."

...E-class.

How should I react in this situation?

"Its tough being in E-class huh?"

"That's my line! Don't insult me! What does it matter to you anyway?! I'm just an underachieving E-class girl in the end, right?!"

"Wait, don't get angry, you're raising your voice! Calm down! What do you think will happen if Eliza catches wind of this?"

"There would be no problem at all! It was a mistake to allow you to talk to me in the first place!"

With her being so loud, we were getting a few side glances here and there.

It probably wouldn't be best if I got angry here.

If she starts crying again, people would most likely think it was my fault.

Not even I'm willing to let things spiral in that direction.

The atmosphere between us had become awkward, leaving only the sound of the fountain to answer our thoughts.

If only it could give me the answers on what to say...

"Hey, was it fun? Being one of Eliza's close aides, I mean."

"...fun or not fun, such things didn't matter at the time."

"That's not true. Why would you want to be together with a person if you're not having fun?"

"Everyone just wanted to be with her, isn't that enough? I can't understand why you're being so pushy about this."

"It's important though, if you truly weren't having fun while you were with Eliza, then why are you so sad?"

She went quiet for a while before replying.

"...I guess it was a little fun. I mean, I was... happy being together with Elizasama, it was my reason for living, it was a part of my very being."

"Isn't the answer easy then? All you have to do is find a new purpose in life."

"Don't say such a thing!"

She turned her face towards me and glared, in her eyes I could see something furious.

Getting up softly, I reached my hand to her.

"Well, I need to get going to my club. We still haven't decided what we're

going to do, but we're already building something for it. It's surprisingly fun, so why don't you come with me?"

"I won't go! I have no interest in such a thing!"

"Don't say that, just come one time and you'll see. We have female club members too, and its really worthwhile working together with everyone on the same thing."

```
"...I won't go."

"Is that so... well, that's too bad." I pulled my hand back.
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To the her that had hung her head again, I began to slowly walk away, but I didn't leave without throwing these words at her first:

"The construction is happening just north of the freshman dorms, you can come at anytime that you want."

```
"...I won't go."

"I'll be waiting."

"..."
```

Bosoboso (sfx: Whisper) I could hear a faint whispering sound coming from my back.

I didn't quite understand it, but there was one thing I'm sure I heard.

'I will definitely, definitely not go!!'

Blacksmith Volume 2 Chapter 5

Okay, now all I've got to do is choose my electives.

After school, I was thinking about such things while I worked on building the clubroom.

First I chose Herbalism, so next would be...

Raising a cute pig in Animal Husbandry would be nice. Eating it later might hurt, but it's one of the leading candidates.

I want to eat better and better meats.

Martial arts is definitely a no.

It's a very disheartening class.

When I saw the figure of a girl with a physique larger than my own I couldn't help but freeze up.

I almost hurled, and decided that class wouldn't be for me. What was that... that girl that couldn't have been a girl.

Tomorrow maybe I'll try out the Medical Science, though Law sounds interesting as well.

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"Bucho."

"Hmm?"

"You'll get hurt if you work while thinking absentmindedly."

"Ah that's right, thanks."
```

I should probably take my club member's advice and concentrate on my work. Even so, who was that guy?

Soon I should take to learning the club roster by heart. When I call out to them, it'd be really disheartening if I was only able to refer to them by 'That person over there'.

So far the clubroom's construction seems to be going really well.

Everyone worked with high motivation, and the artisans that came from Thomas-san's territory were very masterful in their trade.

Speaking of people who've recently came... it took a while, but she's here. Mary's been coming over to spectate our progress as of late.

In less than two days, she had already blended into the group as if she were an original member.

Since she has a good enough appearance to be called a beauty, she's also become a good source of motivation for our male members.

I mean, all of us want to show off our good side when a pretty girl is around, right?

Even so, I think it was a good idea to take her in.

She's happy, and we're happy, that's what's important.

As I was thinking about such trivial things, in my line of sight I could see one of my club members running towards me at a desperate pace.

I don't know his name, but I do know his face. There's no doubt he's a member.

"Bucho!!"

I had a bad feeling, from his expression I could tell this wasn't going to be a pleasant conversation.

"Take a deep breath, and explain it to me calmly. What happened?"

I mean, I'm still preparing my own heart.

Since I asked, please be a trivial story!

"Fu", can I have a moment?" (sfx: Breath out)

"Take another deep breath in."

"Yes."

He dutifully did another great job of breathing in and out.

"Fu~ That Eliza Deauville is approaching here with a fierce expression right as we speak! Her entourage of four have weird expressions plastered on as well!"

Hey, you're joking right? You're wrong right? Please tell me you're wrong!

Who was it that summoned the Angry Goddess?!!

The members who had heard the story stopped their work with pale faces.

With the wolves coming, everyone started to lump together in a herd.

Now who will be our sacrifice.

...and of course, it couldn't be anyone else but me.

While taking quick strides in my direction, Eliza was glaring holes through me.

Indeed, right now I could feel an unusual amount of hot air in what was usually quite a cold atmosphere.

Even so, she sure is beautiful... No! How can I think about such things, especially right now?

Please, do a U-turn! Turn around! Do not approach! Even if I knew it useless I tried praying a little... and of course, it was in vain.

I wonder if this is how sheep feels when they know they're about to be slaughtered and eaten raw.

I'm not going to run away, but if anyone else does I won't blame them.

Even so, the aura released by Eliza sure is scary.

Wow, we're a pathetic herd.

They can't learn that their 'Bucho' is feeling anxious at heart.

I could feel their lines of sight falling on me.

Huh, I wonder what Eliza's so angry about.

'Cause whoever's responsible is getting a huge scolding later!

"Greetings, Kururi-sama."

Immediately after they arrived, while stopping the girl in her entourage that was about to say something, Eliza spoke herself.

The very same Eliza who was standing right in front of me.

...she's beautiful, but wow, my stomach is killing me.

I definitely wouldn't be able to eat anything at this moment.

"Hey Eliza, what's with the scary face? Even worse, what's with that tone that's as if you're issuing a challenge? My stomach won't be able to handle this pressure you know?"

"Kururi-sama, please stop it with the boring jokes already."

Kiritsu! (sfx: Sharp glare) I could almost hear the blade being drawn from her stare. Her sharp eyes felt like they were digging into my own.

"Uwah, whatever you're angry about I'm sorry, will you forgive us?" I decided it'd be best if I just apologised like normal.

"I'm here for Mary-san."

"Mary?"

Oh... but wasn't she fired from the original Four Heavenly Kings?

"Do you need something from her?"

"Nothing big, she's already out of my entourage. Though recently, she's been extremely rude to me, becoming another's belonging without even telling me about it? How dare she."

"Oh, really?"

The person who summoned the Angry Goddess was me!!

I'm so sorry!! Please don't chastise me!!

"Mary-san."

The voice itself was alluringly gentle, but it had an inexplicable chill to it.

"...yes."

In a tone that was all but fleeting, Mary answered while she rushed over to Eliza.

"Well, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"[..."

Mary looked like she was about to cry.

Heck, I felt like I was about to cry. Eliza was that scary.

"Bucho!" "Bucho!" "Kururi-san!" "Bucho!"

Some of the club members called out to me.

I can't afford to let a wolf take a young female sheep away from the herd.

I understand that feeling. I knew it would be painful, but I didn't think that Eliza would be this intimidating.

My ancestors have probably hunted down dozens of wolves before. This should be easy.

...Fu.

Clenching my right fist tightly, I opened my mouth.

"Eliza wait, what are you going to do to Mary?"

Redirecting her gaze to my face, I could feel the words "There's no need for me to tell you." stab me from Eliza's eyes.

Even so, I wonder what came over me all of a sudden, 'cause before I knew it, I was standing in front of her, meeting her glare head-on.

Ugh, I really want to turn away right now, you know?

"I'm going to punish her of course. Isn't natural to give some discipline to dogs that bite the hands of the owners that feed them? It's the same thing with subordinates, don't you understand?"

"No, I mean specifically, what are you going to do to her as punishment?"

"Why does it matter to you? You're completely unrelated to this problem."

"That's not true, Mary is one of the members in my club. It would trouble me if you just took her without permission."

"I wonder? Are you sure you're not misunderstanding something Kururisama?"

Dang, Eliza sure has sharp eyes today. I almost went to grab my stomach, doing my best to fight the pain.

"Well, why don't we ask Mary-san then?"

"Eh?!" Mary looked like she couldn't hold back her tears any longer.

"Now Mary-san tell me, who do you belong to? Me? Or Kururi-sama? What is your answer Mary-san?"

There was a strong meaning laced into that gentle voice.

Mary was already far beyond her limit, her tears streaming down to her feet non-stop.

"Hick Y-yeah... the one I serve is Eliza-sama o-of course."

"You see, Mary-san said it herself. Do you have any objections Kururi-sama?"

Without waiting for my reply, she and her entourage began walking back down the path she came, with Mary in tow.

The storm had disappeared, for the sacrifice of one young sheep.

"Bucho!" "Bucho!" "Kururi-san!" "Bucho!" "Bucho!" "Bucho!" "Kururi-dono!" "Bucho!" "

The club members that seemed to be in a daze suddenly snapped back to reality.

I looked at everyone's faces.

They were hot, burning faces that seemed to say "This is wrong!".

...I know.

Even I... Even I feel the same way.

You caught me.

...and hey, who called me 'Fucho'?!

"Wait, Eliza!"

I screamed out in a loud voice to make sure she could hear it, there's no way I could just let her leave in silence like this.

Eliza stopped.

Her annoyance could be detected from her back alone.

Eliza and her entourage froze in place, while Mary dashed back, taking refuge behind me.

I don't think I need to say this again but, this is scary as hell!

We're just a bunch of sheep trapped in a corner.

"Eliza, you need to understand human beings more, you need to know a little more of their pain. You can't just do this to people!"

"What? You still don't know why I'm doing this? I'll tell you one last time, this is a problem that only involves me and that girl behind you. So Kururi Helan, why don't you just shut up already and hand her over?"

"I will not, Mary is a member of my club. She's staying here."

"...shut up."

"No, I'm also saying this for you, because I might have to live a humble life

with you in the future, Eliza. I'm creating this opportunity for you to learn about caring for others."

"You know, from the very moment we met I thought you were a funny person, but that ends now. I was a fool to think I could have a serious talk with you."

Gunununu! (sfx: gnashing teeth)

I'm doing this for you, you know?!

"Huh? Well no, I refuse. For the time being, Mary is staying with us."

"Bullshit."

Finally, I snapped.

Eliza is one of the most beautiful girls I've ever seen, born into a powerful, wealthy noble house, and is blessed with a versatile amount of talent. The thing is, she's so blessed to the point where she can no longer understand the feelings of those weaker than her.

That's why she bullies Iris.

For that sort of reason, there's no way I can allow it to continue.

If it's the me of now, I can do it.

At my very best, right now I can carry out my revenge.

Special Move! Dekopin(Forehead Flick) of Friendship!

The Dekopin of Friendship, a special move unlike the violent Dekopin, which uses the full force of a middle finger hooked to the thumb, that only does a light flick using the nails at the tip of the finger!

My attack was a direct hit to Eliza's forehead. "Don't tease people too much, that's not the kind of person you are."?? ...I thought that she would immediately retaliate in angry waves, but Eliza hadn't issued a single word as she stared downwards. "...that hurt." With a faint voice, Eliza's eyes which were usually so sharp were filled with tears. Eh?! She's whimpering?! ...she's so cute. Wait no, no! That's wrong! I'm not supposed to be thinking of such things right now! Eliza covered her forehead with both her hands and let out a small "Au...". "Au?" What the heck is this?! It's so cute!! No, that's not it! That's not it!!! What am I doing?! This is ridiculous!! "Not even my father ever hit me..."

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"What?"
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"You hit me first! I'm going to tell my father to tell off your father!! This is completely unacceptable!"

While in tears, Eliza ran off while holding her forehead.

Everyone behind me was relieved.

Still though, that was so cute.

"We'll remember this!!"

Somebody from her entourage shouted out.

Uwah, that's the cliché line of losers, does this mean it's our win?

Wait, we won?

```
"" "" "Bucho!!" "" ""
```

The club members crowded around me at once.

You guys are hot! Give me some space!

I was finally caught, and somebody put me on their shoulders.

I was then thrown into the air about ten times before I was let down. What awaited me with teary eyes there, was Mary.

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"Hey, welcome back."
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"Yes, I'm back."

Mary was just crying a little while ago, but she started to cry again.

Unlike last time though, these were tears of happiness.

The club members were delighted.

I made the right choice.

Hmm... I wonder if I'm actually good at this kind of stuff? Yet here I am, the only anxious person in a crowd of people celebrating.

I have a feeling I might have just jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire.

Thinking of what kind of revenge Eliza has in store for me sent shivers down my spine.



Blacksmith Volume 2 Chapter 6

Today I'm going to the Medical Science elective during my first period.

Really, there is only so much a single person can learn at a time.

That's what I was thinking about when I was caught by a guy with a refreshing smile on his face.

"Hey Kururi-kun, I heard the rumors. Is it true? Did you really challenge Eliza?" "Be quiet, we're in the middle of class."

I pretended that I didn't hear Rail's comment while I was looking at the class tools.

One set of medical equipment is used by two people each.

At one of the eight square tables in the classroom, we listened to the lecture of the current instructor in our four groups.

"If you really had offended Eliza, that's a scary thought. I could never resolve myself to do that, heck, not even Prince Arc would try offending her."

"Please be quiet, I won't be able to listen to the instructor's lesson."

I can barely focus on the lesson as it is, and I **definitely** don't want to think about Eliza any more. My stomach can't take it.

Whether or not my scolding worked, I could no longer hear Rail's voice anymore.

Did he give up?

Curious, I turned to Rail's direction...

Eh?!

He was just silently standing there, smiling at me. Hahaha... That's weird, I don't remember anything funny happening for him to smile like that.

I was right! This guy is just too creepy!

After the instructor's lecture ended, he passed around some guinea pig corpses that are used for experiments to each group.

It looks like we're dismantling them today.

This might be good in its own way, I might be able to use it as reference for later on, and there's even a medical book that describes the procedure, more or less.

Right as the experiment was about to begin, Rail switched places with my partner as if it was the most natural thing in the world to do.

"The instructor's lecture is over, we can have a conversation like this now, right?"

"May I ask what you want to talk about? Is it about Eliza?"

"Unfortunately, you are correct, so? What really happened between the two of you? I'm interested on your take of the events that transpired."

"Hey, if you're going to keep doing this, I'd prefer to work alone. I need to concentrate on my hands."

"Well, that's no good right? Hey, I'm a bit anxious since this is the first time I've dissected anything, so why don't we do this together?"

He flashed a wink my way.

This is my first time doing something like this too.

My nerves are on edge as well. Everyone else looked like they were working through it just fine, though the instructor gave out pointers here and there when he thought they were having trouble.

"Okay, for now let's just continue with the procedures."

"Right, the book says we need to start by opening up the stomach. Straight to the point, huh?"

We slowly opened its stomach with our medical knives.

"Woah!"

A bit of squirted out and splashed onto Rail's face. I felt a little sick looking at it, you see I don't have much resistance to these things. It was like this during that time with the sheep too.

Even so, the mechanism of the internal organs is quite worrisome, there's a lot of tension that comes with doing this, huh?

"This is the heart... right?" I tried poking its little heart with my finger.

"... I give up, that's amazing, to actually have enough courage to just touch it like that. You truly are the man who had angered Eliza."

Stop leading the conversation over to Eliza!

Taking out one of the organs in revenge, I mushed it onto Rail's face without hesitation.

"Uwaa, how terrible."

Even though he was wiping mucus off of his face, his smile still hadn't disappeared. Maybe he's an 'M'?

"Hey Kururi-kun, may I ask why you chose to come to Medical Science? Are you going to become a doctor in your territory?"

"...its because of gold."

"Money? Haha, my image of you just changed. Though I'm still interested, in what happened between you and Eliza that is."

In response, I mushed another organ into his face.

He yelled "Wabbu" while he bent his head back to get away.

"I was thinking about becoming a doctor in the future, and hey, Kururi-kun, even though our purposes are different, we're still going to be together for the rest of class. Wouldn't it be better to have a conversation instead of staying in awkward silence? I want to talk with you."

Well I don't want to talk with you. Getting involved with you will only bring trouble.

"The other students never do. They always avoid me in class and never let me in on their conversations you know?"

"Its because you're always with Prince Arc, and isn't it selfish of you to decide that I'm the only one that can get along with you?"

You're doing this too one-sidedly!

First Prince, isn't it selfish of you to just dump him on me like this, where are you?!

"The reason why I think that way is, well..." he looked my way and smiled. "a secret."

"Come to think of it, that selfish prince isn't here with you today... that's interesting."

"So selfish, calling others selfish when they aren't even here, why don't you say it to their face instead?"

"Whatever, it doesn't matter with me, my opinion's not going to change."

As if I could say that!! I unintentionally retorted in my head.

"Hey Kururi-kun, you're acquainted with Iris, right?"

"Yeah, she's my friend."

"Apparently, the prince has taken a liking to her, and I even heard that recently they've been touring the electives together. So? Do you want to have a talk with our pure-hearted prince?"

I think it's about time that I made myself clear.

"That doesn't really have anything to do with me does it? You fall in love when you fall in love, why would any of that bother me?"

When I said that, he raised his hands in surrender, so I pressed on.

"In truth, aren't you the one that's the most worried about their relationship?"

He was one of Iris's love candidates after all, but it's kinda funny how he could be completely sidelined.

"How mean, rather than that I'm more interested in the secret relationship between you and Eliza, Kururi-kun, and as for how I feel about the prince, I guess I'll be with him for another ten years or so? Though by then it'll probably be hard to find a lover or two but anyways, right now I'll just enjoy myself watching over the relationships of people like you."

It looks like he's also had a hard time.

Even so, digging into my open wounds is a different story.

Here, taste my organ attack!!

"You really don't hold back, do you Kururi? Can't say I don't like that relentless side of you though."

"Fh?!"

"...or not, at least not now."

Hopefully I'm misunderstanding something.

I don't want a man to fall for me!

"Its funny talking to you in person Kururi-kun. You're completely different from how I thought you'd be. I figured you'd be more like the rest aristocracy somehow."

"You thought I'd be more of a fool?"

"No, not that. It was more of a concern really, but it seems that sentimentality was unfounded. Sorry for looking at you that way until now, and hey, once you feel up to it, why don't we have a chat sometime as friends?"

It looks like he's blatantly trying to get me to talk about Eliza again.

Stopping this here would probably be the best decision.

"Well, for now lets just focus on the dissection."

Rail responded to my call, "Sure."

The two of us concentrated on the dissection for a while.

Rail looked slightly queasy, but he cleanly removed all the internal organs nonetheless.

"It looks like you have talent as a doctor, Rail."

Unlike my motivation, he's doing this in preparation in become a true doctor.

"Not really, I think people like Kururi-kun who can do such work without any resistance have the real talent."

"I'm just more accustomed to this, that's all. You're the one who's better at thinking about people."

"Maybe, but I have a lot of bad parts too. By studying medicine in order to save lives, we could be robbing workers of opportunities they could have had in their lives. Somehow, thinking about the contradictions doesn't swallow well with me."

"That's just the way human beings are, don't we raise livestock just so that we can consume them later? Some things just need to be done at the expense of others."

"If it's because we need to eat, then I think it's justified. We raised them lovingly, giving them a good life until they had to be used, so there's no problem with that, but what about things like this? This child whose death came just so its body could be dissected on, whereas after it'll just be discarded? I can't help but feel sorry for something like that."

"I don't think that could've been helped though."

"Its that, how human beings will ask a doctor for help if they need it, while non-humans won't." I continued.

"What do you mean?"

For some reason, Rail seems to seriously want to know my answer.

Again, it's probably best to just tell him the simple stuff so he doesn't think too deeply about it.

"I think there's a fatal flaw with that your of thinking, of why you want to

become a doctor."

"Am I going about this wrong? Should I branch off somewhere else? I guess there are many different kinds of doctors out there."

"More or less."

"Yeah."

"Kururi, you really are something aren't you? Thanks for seriously listening to my story. Until this morning, all I wanted to do was make fun of your little bout with Eliza, but now I see you differently."

Aren't you still making fun of me though?!

I'll be sure to return the favour someday!

"Now that all the internal organs are removed, now we just need to stitch the body up and we'll be done."

"...yeah."

Rail's face seems to have cramped up, but he was able to make it to the end. Good job.

After we had finished, I did my best to put up a bold front, letting out a big breath. Fu^{\sim}

"Even so, it sure is hard to use these medical techniques. It'll probably be even more so once somebody is on the brink of death in front of us. Though this'll probably become a great skill to have in the future."

"Then, do you want me to make you something to help you out?"

Even though it might be hard to do, now might be a good time to try it. Let's try to create our own medical equipment.

"You'll do that for me? I knew I wasn't wrong about you!"

"Sure, but first we'll need to go to my room, there's something I need to retrieve first."

"That sounds fun, so sure."

Once we were finished cleaning up, the class was just about to end.

Among the students which left the class in droves, Rail headed over to the instructor.

"Is it okay if I take these children?"

"May I ask why?"

In Rail's hands were the corpses of the guinea pigs we just dissected, all newly stitched up.

"Its because I think they deserve a better end than this, that's the only reason why."

"If you've taken a liking to them then sure, they're all yours."

With the permission of the instructor, Rail crammed the corpses into some linen bags.

"People always call me strange, but I think you're pretty strange yourself Rail." walking beside Rail, I talked to him about why he did that.

"Really?"

"Well, I guess it doesn't matter really and hey, now that you've followed me this far, help me dig a hole."

"Sure."

After school, there was two people standing around the school gate.

We were in the middle of a vast land, so I don't think they'll mind wherever we dig.

We each had our own shovel, but we weren't going to dig at once because we created a working system.

There weren't many pedestrians around either, so it looks like the perfect conditions for digging a hole.

"Until I've had enough, I think I'll be able to go along with sort of thing."

While he was digging a hole, Rail said so.

"I think we can still keep going."

"...yeah."

zakku zakku (sfx: digging) the only thing that could be heard after that was the sound of digging into the soil.

"Is this really helping?"

I heard Rail's voice call out.

"Oh, definitely so."

Haha, Rail and I started laughing.

We were done, buried in the hole was all the guinea pigs in their jute bags.

"Now let's go home-" Rail was about say as he started leaving.

"No, stay here for a minute."

"Hmm?"

"There's something that I want to see."

'Beyond the basics', the 3rd grimoire. I wanted to try my 'New Life' spell.

Pouring my magic into the soil, I softly whispered "Now open your eyes."

The soil seemed to bulge for second, before the seedlings of lush flowers sprouted out.

I don't know what kind of flowers they'll grow to be, but I certainly created a new life with this.

"...That's a nice spell you got there."

Rail smiled gently.

Blacksmith Volume 2 Chapter 7

"Shisho (Master), have you determined your electives yet?"

Today is the school's weekend holiday, it's kinda funny how today should be our break and yet Crossy came to my apartment for some reason.

"Hmm... Herbalism, as well as Medical Science, but I still need to choose two more."

"Is that so? I've gone with Martial Arts and Emperor studies, though the others are undecided still."

With choosing electives it's better to be careful and take your time choosing rather locking in a choice and regretting it later.

With my anxious feelings gone, I stopped tempering the iron I was working on. Looking over my shoulder I asked:

"Oh yeah, you weren't together with Vaine today?"

"Yeah, today is the one holiday we get a week so he told me to use it to rest my body. Even so, I wonder where he disappeared to all of sudden? All sneaky like... the nerve of some people!"

"It's his private day too you know, do try to forgive him."

"...I guess it can't be helped if Shisho says so."

Crossy said so with puffed cheeks, showing that really he still hadn't forgiven him. That's good though, it looks like they've been getting along recently.

"Well, we still have some spare time, so what do you want to do Shisho?"

No, I don't really have spare at all.

Really, I want to look through the Electives document, and then start studying the 4th grimoire now that I'm done with the 3rd.

Also, shouldn't I be allowed to have some private time to myself?! I by no means have spare time.

"I don't really have spare time, so why don't you try to find out where Vaine tried to secretly escape to today?"

"Oh! That sounds interesting! Let's go together, Shisho!"

This is bad, his eyes are shining. It really is heartwarming to see how much he wants to spend his time with me.

I feel a little bad for Vaine, but this is my important disciple's spare time here.

...Ugh, I dug my own grave, and although it's just a little, I'm curious as to what Vaine's hiding. Where did he go today? This is a problem that must be investigated!

Says the no-good human that claims he has no free time, and then decides to just go along with whatever event that pops up.

```
"Then let's go."
"Yes!"
```

When looking for someone, first you need to narrow down the places they might be. Usually, you would first go to a tavern where the exchange rate for information is fixed, but unfortunately there is no tavern here. We do have the next best thing though, the cafeteria. If he's there, Vaine will easily be found due to his large build.

Surely there has to be someone who had seen him.

Entering the cafeteria, we were unable to spot Vaine, so we decided to look around for somebody that would give information to us when we found a pair of girls gossiping with each other.

"Excuse me, but have either of you two seen a student named Vaine around?"

"Vaine is... that really tall person right? I think I saw him leaving the dormitory, but that's all I know."

"That's perfect, thank you."

After thanking the two of them, we left the cafeteria.

"At the very least, now we're certain that he's left the dormitory. Now, where to next?"

"He probably went to a place where'd he have enough space to train, so the park maybe?"

"Well it's our best bet, so let's go."

Once we arrived at the playground, there were already a lot of people doing exercises in pairs, but no Vaine though.

Catching a girl who was still stretching, I decided to ask about Vaine.

"Him? Oh, yeah I saw him, he was jogging around here this morning, mumbling about 'banishing evil thoughts' or something."

"So do you know where he went?"

"Not really, I saw him come out of the bathhouse, but I'm not sure where he went next."

"Thanks, and good luck with your exercise. It would be nice if we could talk again someday."

"Yeah, I'd like to speak with you again too, Kururi-san."

After we finished our greetings with the girl, we left the park.

"So he really was here..."

Crossy placed his hand on his chin, thinking about where we should search next.

"Maybe he decided to leave school grounds?"

"It's probably because you don't leave school often, but it's actually quite a walk to just get out there, so for now let's go and check out the stable's lending records."

"Yeah."

Though, what are we going to do if there is a record that Vaine took a horse? Are we going to chase after him? Even though I had a feeling that doing so would be fun, I think that would be the moment where it'd be better just to quit already.

"Vaine huh? Give me a second, I need to check over today's records."

We arrived at the stables, and the issue requested by me caused the clerk to immediately break out into a run.

Removing the lending roster, he opened it up to today's date.

Tracing it over with his finger, he checked over the name's carefully one by one.

"There aren't any records of a student named Vaine, but I wonder... You said he was rather tall, to the point that it made him stick out, right? I saw someone like that earlier today."

"Do you know where he went?"

"Yeah, last I saw him I think he was heading towards the fountain."

"Really? Thanks."

Bowing my head to the man in charge, the two of us continued our walk yet

again.

"This time there isn't enough information... there are a lot of fountains in the school" Crossy muttered regretfully.

"Not really, when people here refer to 'the fountain' there's really only one place they could be referring to."

I gave Crossy's back a light pat.

"Ah! That's true, Shisho!"

If I were to describe how Crossy looked right now, one could say he was walking with a spring in his step...

It was the same fountain that I checked out before, but I can't say I really know the roads of the school that well.

In front of Crossy, who always praises me, somehow I'm able to put on a brave face, but in truth I'm a emotional wreck inside.

Before we had noticed it we were in the middle of a rose garden.

Where are we again? I really need to get more familiar with the school grounds.

```
"Shisho..."
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"..."

I couldn't see Crossy's face because he was standing behind me, but I could imagine it...

What should I do?!

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"Kururi?"
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A familiar-sounding voice came out from the other side of a hedge covered in roses.

Walking around the hedge, I found myself face to face with Iris, both our eyes opening in surprise.

"Iris, boy am I glad to see you, I'm a little lost so can you give me a hand?"

"It's a little hard to give directions for a road that can't be seen though, would it be okay if I guided you?"

"Thanks, you save-"

I stopped my words mid-way because I suddenly noticed the sharp eyes glaring at me.

The gaze of the man standing a little bit away from Iris, the First Prince Arc.

They were on a date! No wonder he's angry, I would be too if a nuisance suddenly walked in on one of mine.

What bad timing.

"...I wonder, would that be best? You were just enjoying the roses right now, so it'd probably be best if we looked for the pathway on our own. I wouldn't want to interrupt you."

"Thanks, but I can look at these anytime. I can't just leave you alone if you're in trouble Kururi."

"No, you see..." with a gesture that was only visible to Iris, I pointed to Arc standing behind her.

She turned a glance behind her and said "Oh leave him be, he won't mind. We're only going for a short walk after all."

None of my words got through to Iris at all!

The Arc that I could see was furious.

He was probably feeling something akin to "What the hell? Why's he more important than me?"

While he continued to glare daggers towards me.

"...I-if you're truly okay with it."

"I am."

Crossy and I were lead through the grounds by Iris, with a certain prince following not far behind.

Perhaps Crossy was bothered by Arc since he reluctantly kept close to me, and with a force that seemed to say he would be eaten if we were separated too.

...Iris? Did you just make a comment about Crossy and I? I heard that you know.

Crossy let go to walk beside Iris, telling her about where we needed to go so she could guide us properly.

Perhaps because I was too absorbed into their conversation, I forgot about the presence that was approaching me from behind.

I was given a warning, he said "I'm going to remember this, so you better watch out. I know your face, Kururi Helan." the scary words of a horror film came from behind me.

The prince walked up beside me and continued to glare.

What are you going to do if Iris notices?! I wanted to say that, straight to his face even.

I couldn't though, even if the Prince is hostile towards me I shouldn't be fanning the flames here.

This is the moment where I should just pretend I haven't noticed anything.

"This is kind of funny, just a little while ago Vaine was asking for directions too, I think he said he wanted to go to the fountain.."

"Really?! Vaine came here?!"

"Yeah, I acted as his guide, and when we returned to the rose garden you and Kururi were there."

"Iris, which fountain did he go to?"

"I'm your guide, just give me a minute and I'll show you."

With Iris as our guide, we finally reached the fountain we were looking for. Its too bad we had to split up.

Iris said that she would guide us until the end, but we had refused. According to Crossy at the pace we were going, Vaine would already be long gone, so once we got close enough to explain directions, we split.

Ugh... Right after Eliza, I just had to go on and anger the First Prince too. Ahh, I can see my life coming to an end in a 'accident' soon.

I even resolved myself to not get involved as much as possible too...

"There's the fountain."

Crossy said so while walking.

The huge fountain I saw the other day was in front of me yet again.

"Shisho, lets hide."

I obediently followed Crossy's advice, who was already hiding in a bush big enough for two people.

Now that I think about it, haven't I been in a similar situation like this before?

In our lines of sight, the fountain finally came back down revealing them.

Staring at eachother passionately, was the pair of Vaine and a girl I've never seen before.

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"Wah, Shisho, this is..."
"No doubt about it..."
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A confession!

To think that only one week after school had started, that one could already have someone fall for them! Good job Vaine! You truly are enjoying your youth to the fullest!

ļ

Surprisingly, it was the girl who started talking first.

"Vaine..."

The voice of the girl was trembling slightly.

She really was quite a beauty once we got a good look at her face, and she looked even more so when compared to Vaine's.

"That girl, she's a girl in the C-class just like I am."

I noticed that Crossy said so in a low voice.

Though its his face which really made an impression on me.

"Thank you for coming out here today."

The girl took a step forward, continuously darting her eyes between the ground and Vaine.

"Woah Shisho, for some reason my face has become hot as well."

"Me too, but Crossy..."

Maybe if I was a girl, I would be squealing at this moment like "Aiiieee~".

"Tell me what you need to, and make it brief."

Vaine's miscellaneous words were cruelly thrown at the other party.

That's not what you're supposed to say! Crossy was probably thinking the same thing, scrunching his eyebrows. This couldn't help but frustrate me a little.

"Shisho, that guy is an idiot, will he be okay?"

"I don't know, let's just spectate for the time being."

Our voices had become slightly louder do to our excitement.

Wait, don't we actually look really disturbing right now?

This is bad! This is going to ruin our images! What do we do?!

"Oh umm... I..."

"What?"

"That, from the first meeting... about Vaine-san..."

"What about me?"

The girl's voice didn't come out of her trembling lips.

Don't rush it! Also what the hell are you saying to her man?!

I myself would've tried grabbing her shoulders to steady her.

"Now! Go for it!" Crossy and I cheered as we blushed.

This'll be bad if our voices get any louder.

"Vaine-san! I fell in love with you at the very moment I first saw you!"

Gathering her courage, she shot out her confession with a strong and lifted voice.

Crossy looked like he was about to faint.

This is dangerous, all my blood vessels are going *lub-dub* (sfx: heartbeat), if it got any louder I think they could hear it.

"...really?"

Without changing his look, Vaine responded.

To the girl, Crossy and I, we were all hung on hearing what his next words would be...

...

Hey! Say something! Don't just go quiet here!

"C-can we start dating?" The girl stuttered out the following words.

"I'm sorry, it's no good."

Vaine cut down the girl's courage cold.

"...am I not good enough?"

"Ah, totally not good enough."

Don't you have any kinder words than that?! If I had a sword right now I'd stab you with it! What do you mean 'not good enough'?! Isn't she quite the beauty?!

"Shisho, is it okay if I beat him up later?"

"Approved! I'll allow it! For now though, how will she respond?"

"Please, can you tell me why? If you can't, there's no way I could give up like this."

"Why?"

Vaine nodded once, and began to speak.

"My school life is fun thanks to my friends, and I have a lot of plans with them. That's why I'm just too busy to deal with something like that."

"I-I understand... Thank you for coming today..."

The girl squeaked out in a creaky voice, said goodbye, and ran away as quickly as possible.

"Shisho, are those friends he's referring to us?"

"Probably."

"Shisho, do you want to get a hit in too?"

"Yeah."

"Shisho, that guy's an idiot."

"Yes, yes he is..."

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